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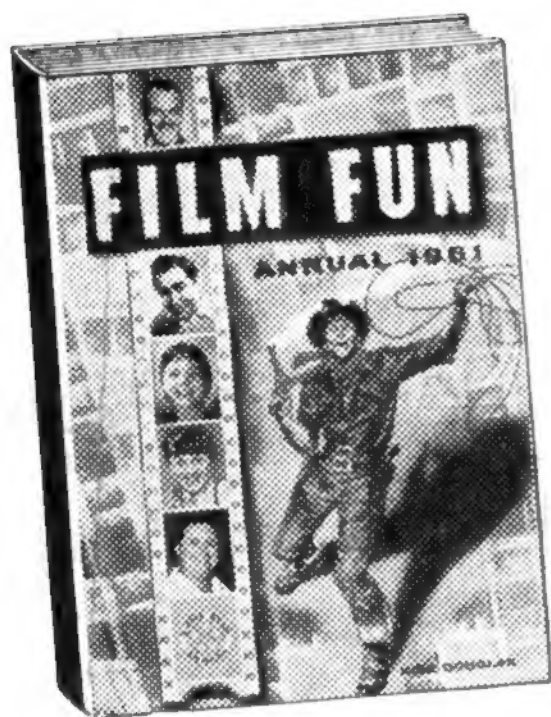
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THE HUNGRY GUNS

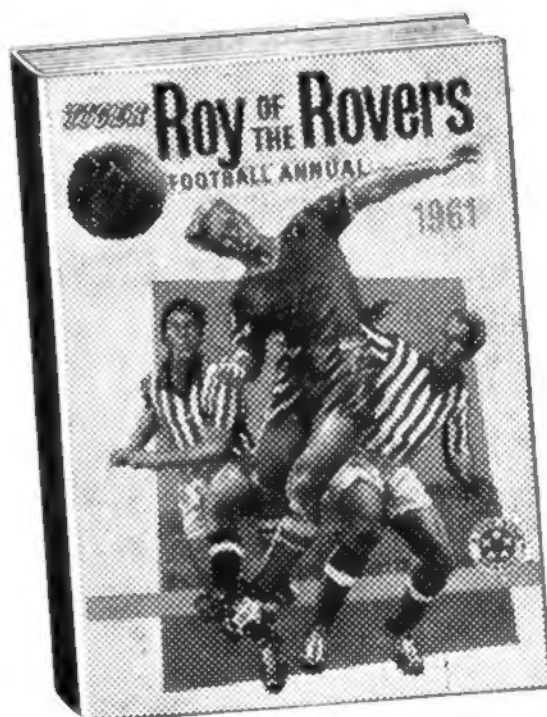


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The HUNGRY GUNS

IT IS NOT ONLY THE SOLDIER WITH THE RIFLE OR THE MACHINE-GUN IN HIS HAND WHO FIGHTS A WAR. EVERY MAN IN UNIFORM PLAYS HIS PART. SOMEONE HAS TO ATTEND TO THE FIGHTING MAN'S MAIL, PAY AND THE WOUNDS HE MAY RECEIVE. ABOVE ALL, SOMEONE MUST KEEP HIM CONSTANTLY SUPPLIED WITH GUNS, AMMUNITION, BOMBS AND MORTAR SHELLS.



BUT ALL TOO OFTEN AND NATURALLY, THE MEN IN THE FRONT LINE THINK THEY ARE THE ONLY ONES WHO ARE FIGHTING THE ENEMY.

Chapter 1. TO THE LAST BULLET

ON THE BATTLE FRONT EAST OF MOUNT ETNA IN SICILY, A BRITISH INFANTRY UNIT WAS HANGING ON DESPERATELY TO AN ADVANCED POINT ON THE ALLIED LINE.

'A' COMPANY ARE STILL BEATING THEM BACK, SIR. BUT WE'RE GETTING VERY SHORT OF AMMO!

I KNOW, I KNOW, JAMES. EVERY COMPANY IS THE SAME.



FROM ANOTHER HARD-PRESSED SECTOR OF THE PERIMETER, A SERGEANT MADE A FRANTIC CALL ON THE FIELD TELEPHONE ...

THIS IS CHARLIE COMPANY. THEY'RE COMING AGAIN. WE'LL TRY TO HOLD ON ... BUT WE NEED GRENADES! FOR PETE'S SAKE, BRING US UP SOME GRENADES.



The Hungry Guns

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SOMEHOW THE REGIMENT KEPT THE LINE INTACT - BUT AT A TERRIBLE COST.

HOW LONG ARE WE EXPECTED TO STAY IN THIS INFERNO? WHY DON'T THEY PULL US OUT... OR GIVE US SOMETHING TO FIGHT BACK WITH?

SIR!
THE MORTAR COMPANY -
THEY'RE OUT OF BOMBS!

FEUER!

THE ATTACK CEASED AS THE ENEMY DREW BACK TO RE-GROUP, BUT THERE WAS NO RELIEF FOR THE BRITISH INFANTRY UNIT.

The Hungry Guns

FOR A WHOLE HOUR THE TERRIBLE BARRAGE CONTINUED, THE GROUND HEAVING AS IF IN AN EARTHQUAKE, AS SHELL AFTER SHELL CRASHED RELENTLESSLY DOWN.



The Hungry Guns

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AT LAST THE NERVE-SHATTERING BARRAGE STOPPED - BUT IT WAS IN THE TENSION-FILLED LULL THAT FOLLOWED THAT MEN BEGAN TO SHOW THE EFFECTS OF BOMBARDMENT . . .



IN THE LONG MINUTES OF TENSION, CAPTAIN MIKE REILLY TRIED IN VAIN TO CONTACT H.Q. . . .



AND I'LL TELL YOU WHY, SERGEANT. IT'S BECAUSE THOSE SUPPLY DRIVERS DON'T LIKE TO COME TOO NEAR THE FIGHTING. THEY'RE LOOKING AFTER THEIR OWN SKINS. YOU CAN BE SURE...SHELTERING BEHIND COVER SOMEWHERE.



The Hungry Guns

BUT CAPTAIN REILLY WAS
WRONG - BITTERLY AND
UNJUSTLY WRONG.



THE SUPPLY COLUMN
HAD TRIED HARD...
BUT HAD FAILED
TO GET THROUGH.

AND AT THAT VERY MOMENT, MORE TRUCKS WERE BRINGING IN
SUPPLIES... AND BETTER STILL, A RELIEF UNIT.

LUMME! THEY'VE
REALLY BEEN HAVING
IT TOUGH IN THIS
SECTOR.

YES, AND NOW WE'RE
IN FOR A TASTE OF
WHAT THE FIFTH
RIFLES HAS BEEN
GOING THROUGH!
LUCKY US!



The Hungry Guns

7

BY DUSK, THE THREATENED GERMAN ATTACK STILL HAD NOT MATERIALISED AND THE RELIEVING UNIT WAS ABLE TO CREEP STEALTHILY INTO THEIR NEW POSITIONS.



BATTLE-SHAKEN AND EXHAUSTED, THE REMNANTS OF THE BATTERED FIFTH RIFLES TRUDGED AWAY FROM THE FRONT.



The Hungry Guns

A MILE FARTHER ON, A JEEP BRAKED TO A HALT AT THE HEAD OF THE STRAGGLING COLUMN OF INFANTRYMEN. IT CARRIED THEIR BRIGADIER.



YOUR UNIT HAS BEEN MAGNIFICENT, CAPTAIN REILLY. NOW YOU CAN FORGET THE FIGHTING FOR A SPELL. YOU'RE GOING BACK FOR A REST - TO SIENTA.

FINE, BUT HOW ABOUT SOME TRANSPORT, SIR? MY MEN ARE SO TIRED THEY CAN HARDLY STAND.

I'M SORRY, CAPTAIN, BUT I CAN'T SPARE ANY TRUCKS. EVERY VEHICLE THAT IS SERVICEABLE IS BEING USED TO RUSH SUPPLIES TO THE FORWARD POSITIONS.

BUT, SIR, SIENTA IS AT LEAST ANOTHER FIVE MILES ON!



BUT THE FIFTH RIFLES HAD TO MARCH...ON DRAGGING AND BLISTERED FEET.

JUST THREE LORRIES... THAT'S ALL WE NEEDED. HEAR WHAT THE BRIG SAID? OUR BRAVE SUPPLY BOYS ARE BRINGING UP THE AMMUNITION - NOW THE FIGHTING'S DIED DOWN!



The Hungry Guns

9

A NEW DAY HAD DAWNED BY THE TIME THE WEARY MEN REACHED SIENTA - TO FIND ITS MAIN STREETS LINED WITH SUPPLY VEHICLES.

NO TRUCKS TO SPARE, THE BRIG SAID. LOOK AT THAT LOT!



SEE WHAT THEY CALL THEMSELVES - 'THE FIGHTING SEVENTEENTH'!

AND NOT A SPOT OF PAINT CHIPPED OFF! REAL VETERANS, EH?



The Hungry Guns

THE FIFTH RIFLES MOVED SLOWLY PAST THE LORRIES, THEIR ANGRY JEERS BRINGING A FLUSH TO THE FACE OF BURLY SERGEANT BARKER OF THE SUPPLY COMPANY.

THEY'VE HAD IT ROUGH -
ANYONE CAN SEE THAT!
BUT WHY DO THEY TRY
TO TAKE IT OUT
ON US?



CAPTAIN JEFF HUGHES, THE OFFICER IN CHARGE OF THE SUPPLY UNIT, OVERHEARD HIS SERGEANT'S ANGRY MUTTERING.

THEY DIDN'T MEAN ANYTHING, SERGEANT. THEIR NERVES AND TEMPER'S MUST BE SHOT TO PIECES.

I SUPPOSE SO, SIR!
AND WE CAN'T REALLY
CRITICISE, CAN WE?
NOT HAVING BEEN IN
ACTION YET, I
MEAN!



BUT ALREADY, CIRCUMSTANCES WERE FOSTERING THE ILL-FEELING THAT HAD BEEN CAUSED...

I'M SORRY, CAPTAIN, BUT YOUR MEN WILL HAVE TO TENT DOWN JUST OUTSIDE THE TOWN. ALL THE SPARE HOUSE BILLET'S ARE OCCUPIED.



WHAT? YOU MEAN BY THESE DRIVERS? LOOK, SIR, MY MEN HAVE JUST COME OUT OF THE LINE...

THE TOWN MAJOR SHOOK HIS HEAD REGRETFULLY AND WITH SULLEN FACES, THE INFANTRYMEN FORCED THEIR LEADEN LEGS INTO MOVEMENT AGAIN.



IT'S ONLY FOR TONIGHT, CAPTAIN. WE'LL HAVE EVERYTHING MORE ORGANISED SOON !

ALL THAT DAY
THE FIFTH RIFLES
SLEPT LIKE LOGS -
AND DURING THE
EVENING, CAPTAIN
MIKE REILLY HAD
A VISITOR.

I HOPE I
HAVEN'T DISTURBED
YOU - I KNOW HOW
DOG-TIRED YOU
MUST BE, BUT
THAT'S WHAT I
CAME TO SEE
YOU ABOUT.



WHEN MY UNIT ARRIVED AT
SIENTA YESTERDAY EVENING,
WE DIDN'T KNOW YOU CHAPS
WOULD BE COMING AS WELL;
CONSEQUENTLY, WE TOOK THE
BILLETS THAT WERE GOING.
BUT NOW MY MEN AND I
WANT YOU TO HAVE THEM -
YOU'VE EARNED THEM.



IT WAS A FRIENDLY GESTURE, BUT CAPTAIN MIKE REILLY WAS STILL TOO TIRED AND STRAINED TO BE REASONABLE.

JUST A BIT LATE, AREN'T YOU? MY LADS HAD TO SET UP THEIR TENTS BEFORE THEY COULD TURN IN AND I'M NOT WAKING THEM UP NOW... JUST TO EASE YOUR CONSCIENCE? WE'LL STAY RIGHT WHERE WE ARE.



CAPTAIN JEFF HUGHES STARED AT THE OTHER MAN'S BACK...AND FOUGHT TO HOLD DOWN HIS TEMPER.

THAT'S WHAT I GET FOR TRYING TO BE HELPFUL. ALL RIGHT - HE'S ONLY SPITING HIMSELF AND HIS MEN.



The Hungry Guns

AND THAT EVENING, AS THE TROOPS MINGLED IN THE BATTLE-SCARRED STREETS OF SIENTA...

I *DID* FEEL SORRY FOR THOSE INFANTRY BLOKES, BUT NOT ANY MORE. THE WAY THEY'RE ACTING, YOU'D THINK THEY WERE THE ONLY ONES DOING THEIR BIT!

I KNOW! AND WHERE WOULD THEY BE WITHOUT THE SUPPLY LINES BEHIND THEM?



A ROUGH HAND JERKED THE DRIVER ABOUT...

I HEARD THAT! AND I'M GOING TO TELL YOU SOMETHING! A WHOLE LOT OF OUR MATES ARE DEAD... BECAUSE YELLOW RATS LIKE YOU LET US DOWN!

CALM DOWN, MATE, AND TAKE YOUR PAWS OFF ME!





The Hungry Guns

IN NO TIME THE STREETS WERE FILLED WITH PUNCHING, WRESTLING MEN AND ANGRY SHOUTS AND CURSES AWAKENED THE ECHOES...



FOR TEN MINUTES THE MELEE CONTINUED UNCHECKED - AND THEN A JEEP ROARED ON TO THE SCENE...

STOP THIS FIGHTING - AT ONCE!
STOP IT, I SAY!



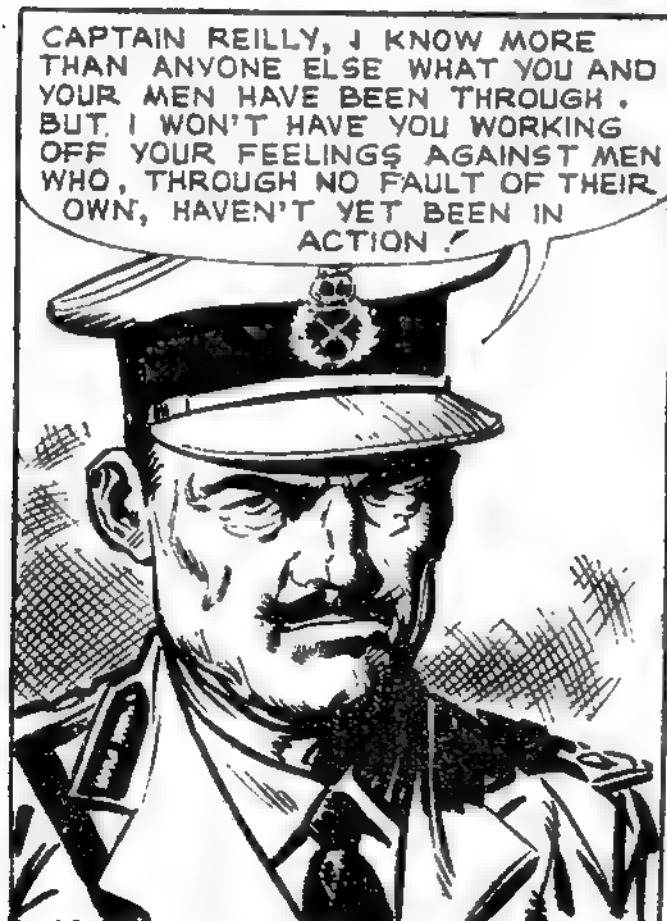
BLAZES! IT'S THE BRIG!

AT THE APPEARANCE OF THE IRATE BRIGADIER, THE FIGHT SUDDENLY PETERED OUT.

CAPTAIN REILLY...
CAPTAIN HUGHES!
IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU SHOWED UP, ISN'T IT? I WANT A FULL EXPLANATION!



The Hungry Guns



STILL FUMING, THE BRIGADIER CLIMBED BACK INTO HIS JEEP AND DROVE OFF. CAPTAIN JEFF HUGHES TURNED TO THE INFANTRY OFFICER BESIDE HIM . . .

THE BRIG'S RIGHT, REILLY. BOTH SIDES WERE IN THE WRONG SO, WHAT SAY WE SHAKE...AND TRY TO FORGET ALL ABOUT THIS ?



FOR A BRIEF MOMENT, CAPTAIN MIKE REILLY HESITATED. THEN, HIS FACE HARDENED . . .

LOOK, HUGHES ! IT'S ALL RIGHT FOR THE BRIG TO TALK...HE WASN'T UP ON THAT RIDGE ! HE DIDN'T SEE HIS PALS DYING ...JUST BECAUSE SUPPLY LET US DOWN. BUT I WAS THERE...AND SO WERE MY BOYS !



The Hungry Guns

JUST THE SIGHT OF YOU AND YOUR NEW, SHINING, USELESS OUTFIT MAKES US SICK TO THE STOMACH. SO, DO US A FAVOUR AND KEEP OUT OF OUR WAY!



DEEPLY DISTURBED, HUGHES WALKED BACK TO JOIN SERGEANT BARKER.

WELL, ONE THING IS SURE, SERGEANT. ANY ILLUSIONS WE HAD ABOUT OURSELVES HAVE NOW BEEN SHATTERED. OUT HERE WE JUST DON'T COUNT...UNTIL WE'VE PROVED OURSELVES!



IT MIGHT BE A GOOD THING AFTER ALL, SIR. I THINK WE WERE JUST A LITTLE COCKSURE...MAYBE WE NEEDED TO BE CUT DOWN TO SIZE.

THE SUPPLY MEN STOOD SILENT IN THE SHADOWY, NOW DESERTED STREET. THEN JEFF HUGHES GAVE A SIGH...

BUT IT'S NOT A PLEASANT THING TO BE DESPISED, SERGEANT. I ONLY HOPE WE GET THE CHANCE TO SHOW THOSE INFANTRY CHAPS THAT THEY'RE WRONG ABOUT US.



Chapter 2. ROADBLOCK

TWO HOURS BEFORE DAWN, CAPTAIN MIKE REILLY WAS AWAKENED FROM A HEAVY SLEEP BY THE SUDDEN RUMBLE OF DISTANT GUNFIRE. THE SKY GLOWED FITFULLY OVER THE BATTLEFIELD...

JERRY GUNS /
SOUNDS AS IF HE
REALLY MEANS
BUSINESS !

OUR LADS
MUST BE COPPING
IT !



ON THE PERIMETER OF THE CAMP, AN ALERT SENTRY CHALLENGED A SOLITARY JEEP'S DRIVER...

HALT!
WHO GOES
THERE ?

ALL RIGHT, SENTRY,
I'M YOUR BRIGADIER.
WHERE CAN I FIND
CAPTAIN REILLY ?



CAPTAIN MIKE REILLY HEARD THE STAFF OFFICER'S VOICE - AND FELT HIS BLOOD RUN COLD. HE KNEW WHAT WAS COMING . . .

YOU'RE GOING TO HATE ME FOR THIS, CAPTAIN REILLY - BUT, BELIEVE ME, NO MORE THAN I HATE MYSELF.

WE'VE GOT TO GO BACK TO THE LINE - THAT'S IT, ISN'T IT, SIR?



YES...I'M AFRAID SO! YOU'VE SEEN THAT SHELLING. IT LOOKS AS IF THE GERMANS ARE GOING TO LAUNCH AN ALL-OUT ATTACK, AND OUR DEFENCES ARE TOO THIN... MUCH TOO THIN! I NEED ALL THE TROOPS I HAVE TO HOLD THE SECTOR.





REILLY'S VOICE WAS LIFELESS AND, WITHOUT FEELING, A NUMB RESIGNATION GRIPPED HIS MIND....

WHEN DO WE MOVE OUT, SIR?

AT ONCE!
AND I'M SORRY,
REILLY. IF I DIDN'T
NEED YOU SO
DESPERATELY...

THE TURN OF EVENTS HAD SPREAD INTO SIENNA. SILENTLY, THE MEN OF THE SUPPLY UNIT WATCHED THE FIFTH RIFLES TRAMP THROUGH THE COBBLED STREETS - MARCHING AGAIN INTO BATTLE.

THOSE POOR DEVILS! THEY AIN'T EVEN HAD A CHANCE TO GET THE PROPER REST THEY WERE PROMISED! AND THEY'RE LOOKING AT US AS IF IT WAS OUR DOING.

SERGEANT, RIGHT NOW THEY HATE US! BECAUSE WE'RE STILL HERE AND THEY ARE GOING BACK TO THE FIGHTING AGAIN!



The Hungry Guns

HOURS PASSED. "THE BOMBARDMENT STOPPED - AND IN THEIR NEW POSITIONS, THE FIFTH RIFLES WATCHED AND WAITED..."

THE LAST TIME HE
SHELLED US, JERRY
NEVER ATTACKED!
MAYBE IT'S GOING
TO BE THE SAME
THIS TIME!

DON'T BANK ON IT!
THINGS ARE GOING TO
START POPPING IN A
MINUTE. I CAN
FEEL IT IN MY
BONES!



AND A SECOND
LATER...

HERE
THEY
COME!



A MASS OF GREY-CLAD FIGURES
BROKE FROM COVER AND SWEEPED
DOWN THE SLOPES OF THE
VALLEY. THE FIFTH RIFLES
OPENED FIRE AND HERE AND
THERE, GAPS APPEARED IN
THE ENEMY LINE...

VORWART!



THE FIRE INTENSIFIED INTO A TORNADO OF STEEL THAT RIPPED
THE ADVANCE INTO SHREDS. IT FALTERED - THEN TURNED:

BACK...BACK
TO OUR LINES!
THE BRITISHERS
STILL HOLD!



The Hungry Guns



The Hungry Guns

AND AT COMMAND POST...

FIFTH RIFLES,
SIR? THEY NEED
AMMUNITION
SUPPLIES, URGENTLY!

BY THUNDER, THEY
MUST HAVE GIVEN
THE GERMANS A GO
OF IT. BUT IF THEY
NEED MORE, THEY
SHALL HAVE THEM.
SEE TO THIS RIGHT
AWAY, LIEUTENANT!



MOST OF OUR SERVICE UNITS
ARE ALREADY OUT ON THE ROAD,
SIR - ALL EXCEPT THOSE NEW
CHAPS AT SIENTA.

WE'LL GET
THEM ON THE
JOB. THEY'VE
GOT TO START
SOMETIME!



The Hungry Guns

THE ORDER TO MOVE FOUND CAPTAIN HUGHES' UNIT EAGER TO PLAY THEIR PART. AMMUNITION AND OTHER STORES WERE LOADED QUICKLY AND EFFICIENTLY...

LAST TRUCK JUST LOADING, SIR!
EVERY DRIVER KNOWS THE ROUTE
AND HE HAS BEEN GIVEN
TWO DAYS RATIONS!



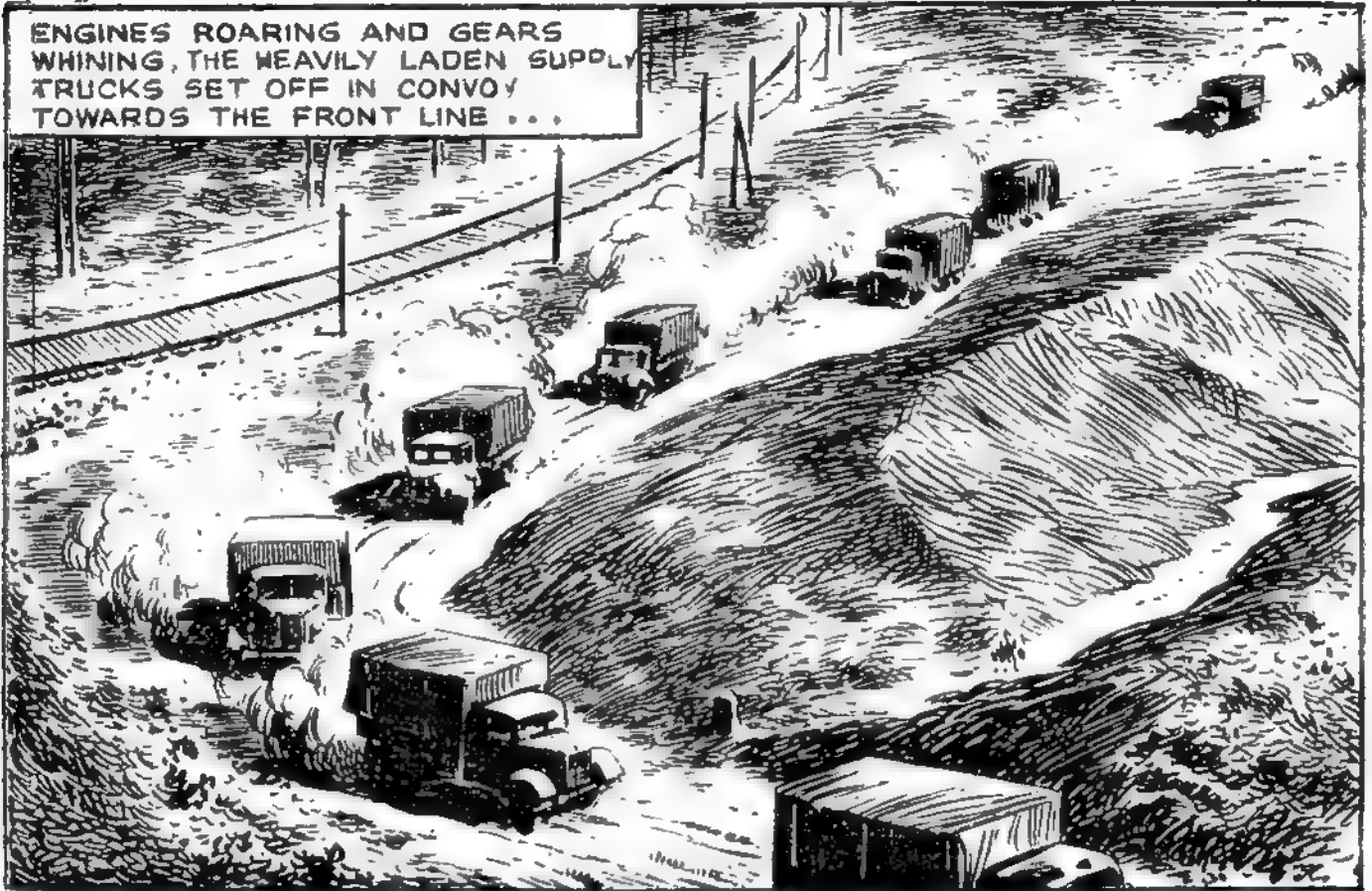
THE YOUNG OFFICER LOOKED EVENLY AT SERGEANT BARKER...

TELL ME, SERGEANT -
DO THEY KNOW THAT WE'RE
DELIVERING TO THE
FIFTH RIFLES?

THEY DO, SIR! I TOLD
THEM JUST SO THEY KNOW
WHAT'S AT STAKE. IF THERE'S
ANY SLIP-UP ON OUR PART,
THOSE INFANTRY BOYS WILL
RAISE CAIN - AND
RIGHTLY SO!



ENGINES ROARING AND GEARS WHINING, THE HEAVILY LADEN SUPPLY TRUCKS SET OFF IN CONVOY TOWARDS THE FRONT LINE . . .



THEY MADE GOOD TIME THROUGH THE BACK AREAS AND THEY MIGHT HAVE BEEN ON ANOTHER TRAINING EXERCISE, EXCEPT FOR THE DISTANT RUMBLE OF GUNFIRE WHICH INCREASED IN VOLUME AND TEMPO AS THEY NEARED THE BATTLEGROUND.



LUMME !
LISTEN TO
THOSE GUNS.
BERT !

YEAH !
RIGHT WHERE
WE'RE HEADING
FOR, TOO !

The Hungry Guns

SOON, THE THUNDER OF GUNS BATTERED AT THEIR EARDRUMS, DROWNING THE NOISE OF THE ENGINES. IN THE LEADING VEHICLE, SERGEANT BARKER SUDDENLY STIRRED, LEANED FORWARD, A FROWN ON HIS FACE . . .



TWO HUNDRED YARDS AHEAD OF THE CONVOY, THE SUN GLINTED DULLY FROM THE CAMOUFLAGED STEEL SIDES OF TWO GERMAN ARMoured CARS CONCEALED IN A THICKET BESIDE THE ROAD . . .



The Hungry Guns

THE UGLY SHAPES OF THE GERMAN ARMoured CARS LURCHED INTO FULL VIEW - THEIR GUNS FLAMED!



THE SECOND SUPPLY TRUCK WAS HIT AT ONCE AND ITS LETHAL CARGO EXPLODED VIOLENTLY...

THEY'LL DESTROY THE WHOLE CONVOY! SPEED STRAIGHT FOR 'EM, SMITH...AND WEAVE!



SWERVING HAIR-RAISINGLY FROM ONE SIDE OF THE ROAD TO THE OTHER, ROCKED BY HARECROWINGLY MISSING SHELL BURSTS, SERGEANT BARKER'S TRUCK ACCELERATED TOWARDS THE ENEMY ARMoured CARS...

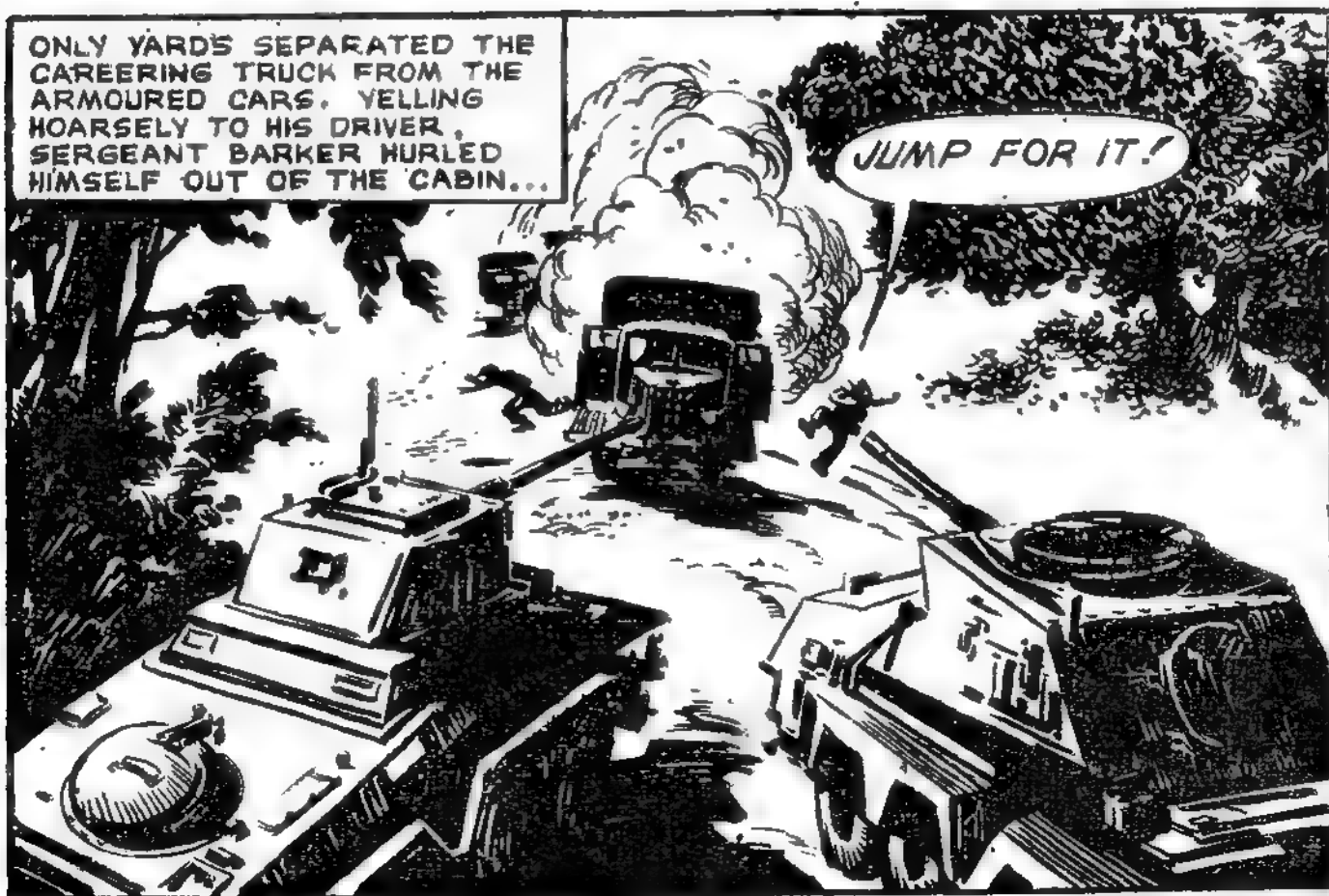


The Hungry Guns

THEN, HANGING PRECARIOUSLY FROM THE OPEN DOOR, SERGEANT BARKER HURLED A GRENADE WHICH EXPLODED FULL ON THE TURRET CASING OF ONE OF THE ENEMY...



ONLY YARDS SEPARATED THE CAREERING TRUCK FROM THE ARMoured CARS. YELLING HOARSELY TO HIS DRIVER, SERGEANT BARKER HURLED HIMSELF OUT OF THE CABIN...



The Hungry Guns

53

LIKE A TERRIBLE BOMB ON WHEELS, THE AMMUNITION TRUCK CRASHED INTO THE HEAVY FIGHTING VEHICLES AND THEY DISINTEGRATED IN A ROARING HOLOCAUST OF FLAME AND FLYING, JAGGED STEEL!



The Hungry Guns

PAUSING ONLY TO PICK UP THE DAZED BUT UNINJURED SERGEANT AND DRIVER, THE TRUCKS SKIRTED THE BLAZING WRECKAGE.



THEY RACED ONWARD FOR HALF A MILE BUT NO OTHER ATTACKS WERE MADE ON THEM. THEN JEFF HUGHES SIGNALLED THE CONVOY TO A HALT.



UNCERTAINTY AND FEAR SHOWED ON SOME OF THE DRIVERS' FACES ...



I'M SURE
I CAN'T TELL YOU
ANYTHING YOU DON'T
KNOW YOURSELVES. THOSE
ARMOURED CARS WEREN'T
OUT HERE ON THEIR OWN...
THERE *MUST* BE OTHER
JERRIES NEARBY. AND THAT
MEANS THE FIFTH RIFLES
HAVE BEEN CUT OFF!

AN ANXIOUS MUTTERING CAME
FROM THE ASSEMBLED DRIVERS,
BUT, IT WAS DRIVER HARRY
SKINNER WHO VOICED WHAT
WAS IN ALL THEIR MINDS.

THEN THERE
ISN'T ANY
POINT GOING
ON, SIR. I
MEAN, THIS
AMMO WON'T
BE ANY GOOD
TO THE FIFTH
RIFLES
NOW!



IT'S NOT AS SIMPLE AS THAT, SKINNER.
OUR CHAPS MAY HAVE BEEN SURROUNDED
BUT YOU CAN HEAR BY THE SHOOTING THAT
THEY'RE STILL FIGHTING ON! THAT
MEANS THAT THEY'LL NEED THIS
AMMO MORE THAN EVER!

The Hungry Guns

BUT EVEN AS CAPTAIN HUGHES SPOKE, THE TWO LOOKOUTS SAW A BLOOD-CHILLING SIGHT.



QUICKLY!
GET TO THE
ROAD. THE
ENGLANDERS
MAY BE ALONG
AT ANY
MOMENT!

BREATHLESSLY, THE TWO LOOKOUTS REPORTED WHAT THEY HAD SEEN...

...AND THEY WERE
RUNNING TOWARDS
THE ROAD ABOUT A
MILE AHEAD!

THERE, SIR -
WE CAN'T
REACH THEM
NOW! UNLESS
WE TURN
BACK AT
ONCE...WE'LL
BE FOR IT,
TOO!



JEFF HUGHES' EYES SPARKED ANGRILY...

THAT'S ENOUGH OF
THAT TALK, SKINNER! I AGREE WE
STAND LITTLE CHANCE NOW OF
GETTING THROUGH TO THEM. BUT,
I, FOR ONE, INTEND TO TRY...





The Hungry Guns

THE OFFICER SWUNG ON HIS HEEL AND LED THE WAY TO THE VEHICLES. GRIM-FACED, HIS VOLUNTEERS FOLLOWED HIM...

WE CAN'T MOVE OFF THE ROAD... SO WE'LL HAVE TO TRY TO BATTER OUR WAY THROUGH. WE'LL TAKE FOUR TRUCKS, EACH CARRYING TWO MEN, ONE TO DRIVE AND ONE TO USE A GUN.



THE MEN WHO HAD BEEN LEFT BEHIND WATCHED IN UNEASY SILENCE AS THE FOUR TRUCKS DROVE AWAY...

THEY'RE CRAZY, THAT'S WHAT THEY ARE / JUST DRIVING STRAIGHT INTO A TRAP.



Chapter 3. CLASH of STEEL

THE GERMANS HAD INDEED PREPARED AN AMBUSH FOR THE CONVOY. HIDDEN AMONG THE TREES LINING THE ROAD, A PLATOON OF INFANTRY WAITED, RIFLES AND MACHINE-GUNS AIMED READY...



WITH THEIR ENGINES STRAINING TO MAXIMUM REVOLUTIONS, THE BRITISH TRUCKS RACED INTO VIEW. INSTANTLY, THE ENEMY OPENED FIRE BUT... BLAZING TOMMY-GUNS SPAT DEFIANCE BACK AT THEM.



The Hungry Guns

EVEN THOUGH THEIR CABIN WALLS WERE RIDDLED WITH BULLETS THREE TRUCKS GOT THROUGH...



...BUT THE LAST VEHICLE WAS SKIDDING WILDLY OUT OF CONTROL.

THE TWO MEN LEAPED CLEAR FROM THEIR DOOMED TRUCK AS IT CAREERED TOWARDS THE GERMANS IN AMBUSH AND AS ONE OF THEM CRASHED TO THE GROUND, A TOMMY-GUN CHATTERED IN HIS HAND...



...AND THE AMMUNITION TRUCK DETONATED IN AN EYE-SEARING FLASH AND A THUNDEROUS ROAR THAT MADE THE GROUND TREMBLE!

NOT A SINGLE GERMAN SURVIVED THAT FEARFUL EXPLOSION. SEEING WHAT HAD HAPPENED, THE OTHER THREE TRUCKS BRAKED TO A HALT:

MY STARS! THEY'RE STILL ALIVE! BUT ONE'S HURT, FROM THE LOOKS OF IT!

COME ON, LADS - GIVE THEM A HAND!



THEY HAD JUST HELPED THEIR DAZED COMRADES ON TO ONE OF THE REMAINING VEHICLES WHEN SERGEANT BARKER GAVE A STARTLED CRY...

LOOK, SIR! THE OTHER TRUCKS!



The Hungry Guns

IT WAS A SHAMEFACED DRIVER HARRY SKINNER WHO DID THE TALKING...


...IT WAS WHEN WE HEARD YOU TAKING ON THEM JERRIES, SIR! WE KNEW WE COULDN'T LET YOU DO IT ALONE. I STILL THINK IT'S SUICIDE, BUT WE'LL GO WITH YOU.

WELL DONE, LADS! I ALWAYS BELIEVED WE HAD THE MAKINGS OF A FINE UNIT... NOW I KNOW IT!


AND SO...UNITED AGAIN...THE CONVOY STARTED ONCE MORE ALONG THE LONG ROAD TOWARDS THE DISTANT GUNFIRE!

HOLD ON, FIFTH RIFLES! WE'RE COMING...WE'LL GET THROUGH TO YOU - SOMEHOW!

THE ROAD BEGAN TO WIND UP INTO THE HILLS, WHERE STEEP PRECIPICES FELL AWAY ALMOST BENEATH THE WHEELS AND HAIRPIN BENDS TAXED THE DRIVERS' SKILL TO THE UTMOST.



IF IT'S NOT GERMANS
- IT'S THIS / ONE SKID
AND WE'LL GO RIGHT
OVER THE EDGE /



OUTLINED AGAINST THE SKY AS THEY CRAWLED UP THE MOUNTAINSIDE, THE CONVOY CAME UNDER FIRE FROM GERMAN GUNS...

The Hungry Guns

AND THE FIGHTING SEVENTEENTH
BEGAN TO RUN A TERRIFYING
GAUNTLET OF FIRE...



BUT WORSE WAS YET TO COME...



THE GERMAN OFFICER STRODE ANGRILY OVER TO HIS ARMoured RECONNAISSANCE CAR.

GET PANZER FOUR ON THE RADIO. THOSE TRUCKS WILL STAND NO CHANCE AGAINST HIS TIGERS.

JAWOHL, HERR HAUPTMANN!

IN RESPONSE TO THE MESSAGE, THE POWERFUL MOTORS OF THREE GIANT TIGER TANKS SNARLED INTO LIFE, THE SOUND MOUNTING TO A DEAFENING ROAR AS THE 56-TON MONSTERS BEGAN TO LUMBER FORWARD...



The Hungry Guns

LIKE SINISTER, PRIMEVAL MONSTERS, THEY BURST OUT OF THE COPSE WHERE THEY HAD BEEN CONCEALED...

RED ONE
AND TWO!
FOLLOW ME...AT
FULL SPEED! WE
MAKE FOR
THE ROAD!



THE BRITISH SUPPLY TRUCKS HAD CROSSED THE SUMMIT OF THE PASS AND WERE GATHERING SPEED DOWNHILL WHEN CAPTAIN JEFF HUGHES SIGHTED THE GERMAN TANKS LURCHING ACROSS THE PLAIN BELOW.





AS ONE MAN, THE DRIVERS INCREASED SPEED - BUT EVEN AS DRIVER SKINNER ACCELERATED, A SHELL BURST ON THE ROAD DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF HIM . . .



The Hungry Guns

THE OVER-HEATED ENGINE BURST INTO FLAME AS ITS FUEL PIPES FRACTURED AND THE SUPPLY TRUCK CAREERED ACROSS THE ROAD INTO THE MOUNTAIN WALL . . .

IT'S ON FIRE! RUN FOR IT! THE AMMO!



SKINNER BEGAN TO SPRINT AFTER HIS CO-DRIVER — AND THEN HE HEARD ANOTHER LORRY BEHIND HIM RECEIVE A DIRECT HIT. HE PAUSED AND TURNED BACK...

THEY'RE KNOCKING US OFF LIKE FLIES. AND IF THE TIGERS BLOCK THE ROAD...IT'S ALL BEEN FOR NOTHING! I'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING!



The Hungry Guns

FIGHTING DOWN A RISING FEELING OF PANIC THAT BEGAN TO GRIP HIM, SKINNER RAN BACK TO HIS OWN TRUCK . . .



THE LAST OF THE SUPPLY CONVOY RACED PAST BUT HE IGNORED IT AND CLIMBED INSIDE THE SMOKE AND FLAME-FILLED CABIN .

THE ENGINE STARTED AND SCREAMED PROTESTINGLY AS HE PUT IT INTO GEAR. IT JOLTED AWAY FROM THE CLIFF FACE AND THEN THE DAMAGED MOTOR CUT DEAD. BUT THE HEAVY TRUCK WAS ALREADY GATHERING SPEED DOWN THE SLOPING ROAD...



A TWIST ON THE WHEEL SENT THE FIERY VEHICLE
STRAIGHT OVER THE EDGE OF THE ROAD...



NEXT MOMENT, THE SUPPLY TRUCK SMASHED DOWN AMIDST THE ENEMY TANKS... AND THE AMMUNITION IGNITED IN A CATAclysm OF SOUND!



IN THE LEADING TRUCK, CAPTAIN JEFF HUGHES STARED IN HORROR AT THE INFERNO BELOW, THEN TURNED GRIMLY BACK TO THE ROAD AHEAD...

THAT WAS SKINNER! HE... HE DROVE HIS TRUCK DOWN ON THOSE TIGERS - SO THAT WE COULD GET THROUGH. NOT MANY MEN HAVE THAT KIND OF COURAGE...



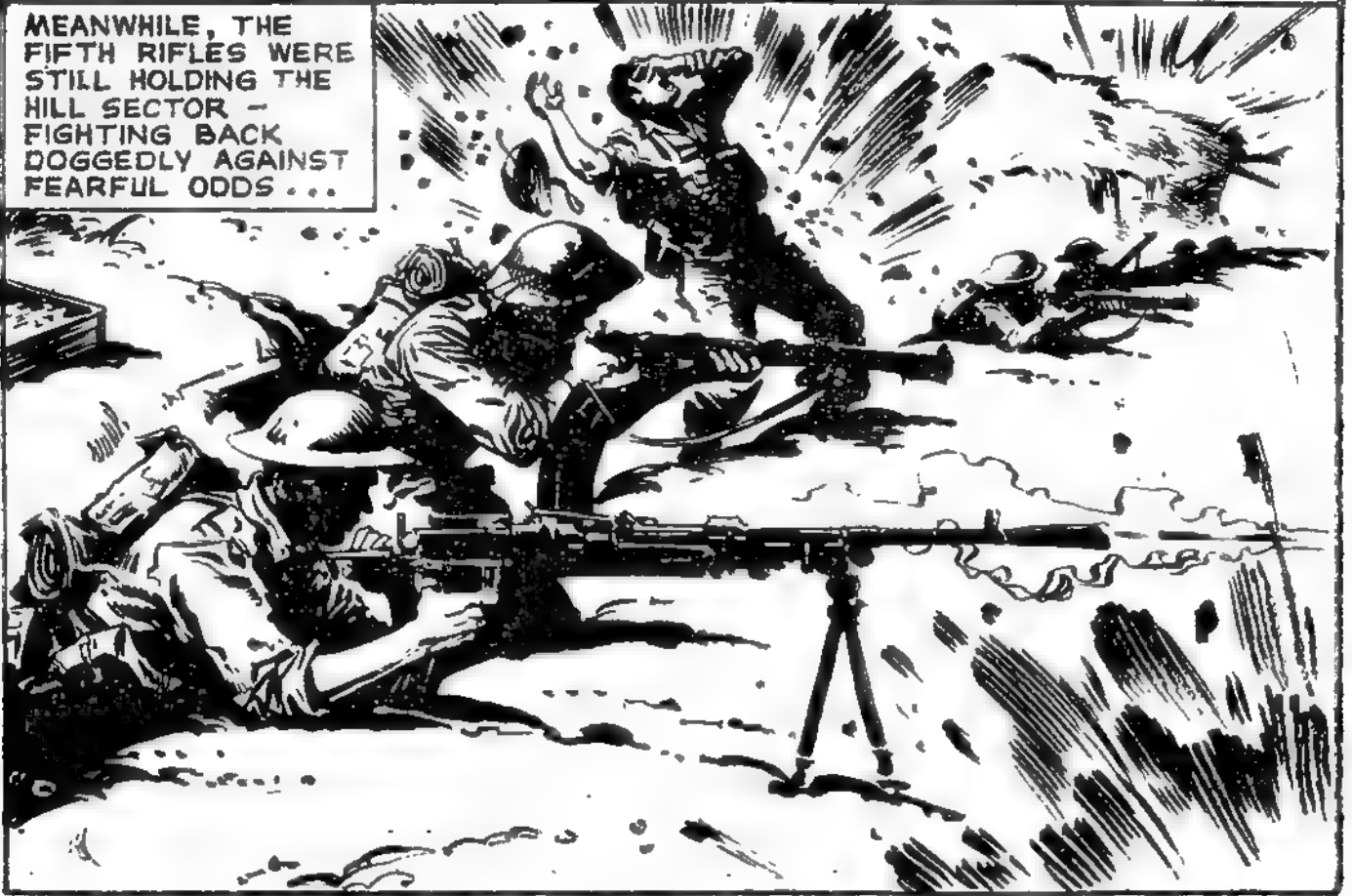
DRIVER SKINNER HAD DONE MUCH MORE THAN DESTROY THE THREAT OF THE GERMAN TANKS, HE HAD INSPIRED HIS COMRADES BEYOND THE POWER OF ANY WORDS.



AS THE SURVIVING TRUCKS OF THE 17TH SUPPLY COMPANY SPED ON, EVERY MAN HAD ONE FIXED THOUGHT IN HIS MIND - TO REACH THE FIFTH RIFLES, OR DIE IN THE ATTEMPT!

Chapter 4. **BREAK-THROUGH**

MEANWHILE, THE FIFTH RIFLES WERE STILL HOLDING THE HILL SECTOR - FIGHTING BACK DOGGEDLY AGAINST FEARFUL ODDS



BUT THE END WAS NEAR. EVERY MAN WAS IN THE LINE, INCLUDING THE COMPANY COMMANDER, CAPTAIN MIKE REILLY.



The Hungry Guns

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THE FIRE FROM THE BRITISH POSITIONS HAD ALREADY SLACKENED AND CAPTAIN REILLY DID NOT NEED THE SERGEANT'S GRIM REPORT TO TELL HIM WHAT HE ALREADY KNEW.



FOR A MOMENT, THE INFANTRY OFFICER'S SHOULDERS SLUMPED WEARILY...

NO MORTAR SHELLS... AND NOW NO BULLETS? AS YOU SAY, SERGEANT, WE'VE HAD IT... NOW WE'VE REALLY HAD IT!



The Hungry Guns

THEN HIS JAW SET GRIMLY, AND HE DREW HIMSELF UP...



WE HELD OUT HERE AS LONG AS WE COULD, BUT NOW WE'VE ONLY TWO CHOICES LEFT. TO GIVE OURSELVES UP—OR TO HIT THE GERMANS ONCE MORE WITH THE ONLY WEAPON WE HAVE LEFT—THE BAYONET!

THEN I SAY, LET'S GO DOWN FIGHTING, SIR! AND I'M SURE THAT'S WHAT THE OTHER LADS WOULD WANT!

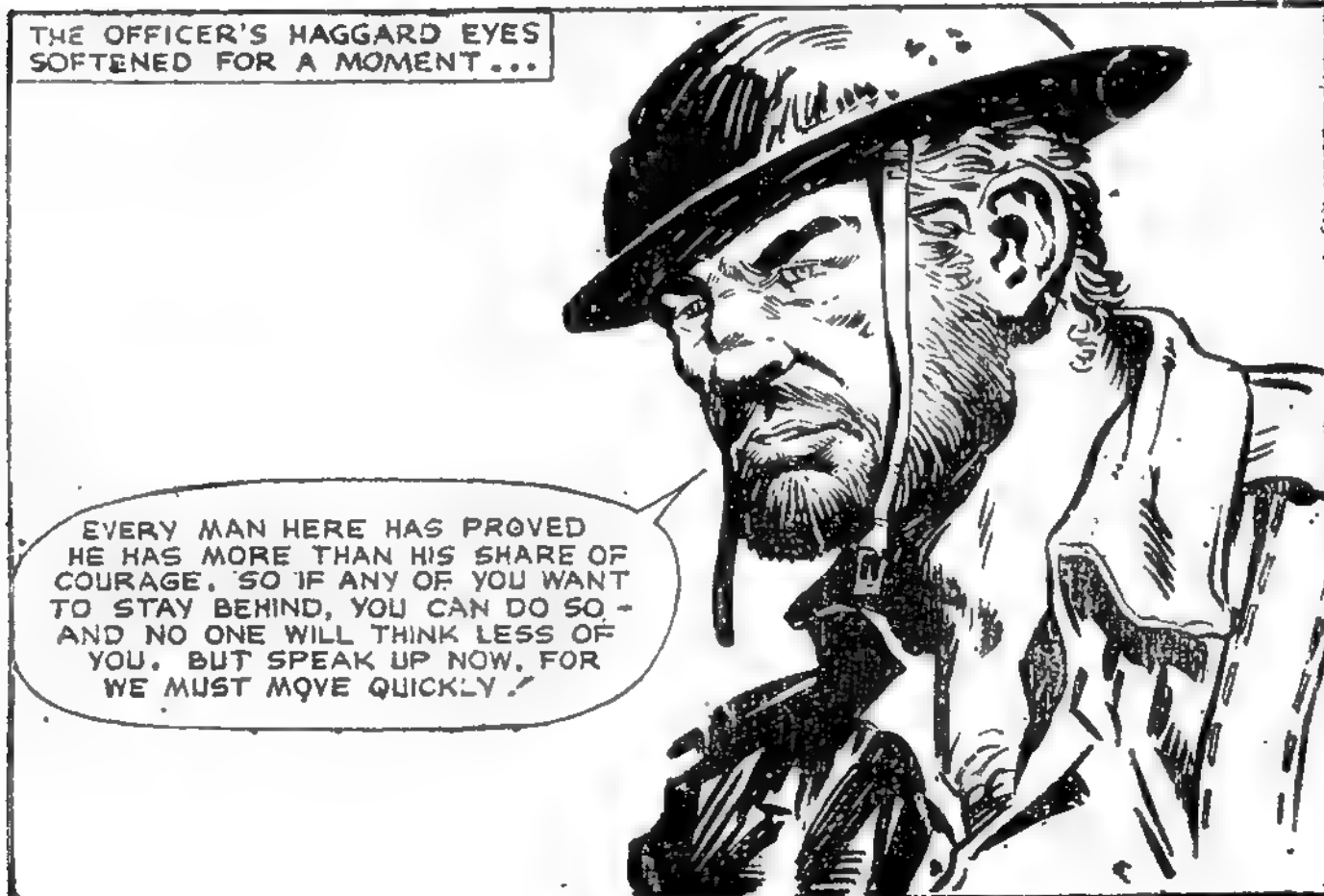
RIGHT! GET EVERYONE UP HERE...NOW!



A MERE HANDFUL OF BATTLE-GRIMED INFANTRYMEN GATHERED BEFORE CAPTAIN MIKE REILLY AND HE TOLD THEM OF HIS INTENTION. THEN...



THE OFFICER'S HAGGARD EYES SOFTENED FOR A MOMENT...



The Hungry Guns

BUT FOR ANSWER THERE WAS ONLY THE COLD RASP OF STEEL AS EACH MAN FIXED HIS BAYONET TO HIS RIFLE.

RIGHT, MEN. THEN
THAT'S SETTLED!
NOW LET'S
GO!



WAIT! LOOK -
COMING RIGHT
UP. AT US....!

THE GALLANT REMNANTS OF THE FIFTH RIFLES PAUSED ON THE LIP OF THE INFERNO INTO WHICH THEY WERE ABOUT TO CHARGE. THEY GAPED IN SILENT ASTONISHMENT FOR A MOMENT - THEN GAVE A TREMENDOUS CHEER.



SECONDS LATER, THE 17TH. SUPPLY COMPANY HAD REACHED THE HILL POSITIONS AND CAPTAIN JEFF HUGHES FACED A DAZED MIKE REILLY.



The Hungry Guns

THERE WAS NO TIME FOR FURTHER COMMENT. SERGEANT BARKER'S VOICE ROSE HARSHLY ABOVE THE CLAMOUR OF GERMAN GUNS.

COME ON, LADS -
GET THIS AMMO OFF!
THERE'S FIGHTING
TO BE DONE!



AND SO, STILL RINGED BY THE ENEMY, THE MEN OF THE FIFTH RIFLES AND THE 17TH. SUPPLY COMPANY BEGAN TO HIT BACK... HARD!

HERE'S WHERE
THEY TAKE SOME
OF THEIR OWN
MEDICINE!



The Hungry Guns

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DRIVEN TO A FRENZIED FURY, THE GERMANS TRIED TO STORM THE SLOPES, BUT A TORNADO OF FLYING LEAD RIPPED INTO THEM AND THE ATTACK WITHERED.



BRITISH MORTARS RANGED ON THEIR GERMAN COUNTERPARTS AND A RENEWED BARRAGE OF DEADLY BOMBS BEGAN TO WREAK HAVOC ALL ALONG THE ENEMY LINE.



The Hungry Guns

THE DRIVERS OF THE 17TH. SUPPLY
HAD DONE I...AT THEY SET OUT TO
DO...BUT THEY DID NOT STOP
AT THAT.



MIND ME
SHARING THIS
HOLE WITH YOU?
I WANT TO GET
IN THIS, TOO!

HELP
YOURSELF, SARGE.
THE MORE THE
MERRIER!

FOR ANOTHER VIOLENT HOUR THE BATTLE RAGED. THE GERMANS HURLED ATTACK AFTER ATTACK AT THE HILL - BUT THE BRITISH DID NOT YIELD AN INCH. THEN, SUDDENLY, THERE WAS SILENCE...

WHAT'S HAPPENING, JEFF? WHAT'S JERRY UP TO?

IT'S ALMOST TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE, MIKE. BUT I REALLY THINK... THEY'VE GONE!



THE DISTANT BEAT OF ENGINES AND THE CLATTER OF CATERPILLAR TRACKS REACHED THE STRONGPOINT...

TANKS! SHERMAN TANKS!

YAHOO! THIS TIME IT'S REALLY A RELIEF COLUMN!



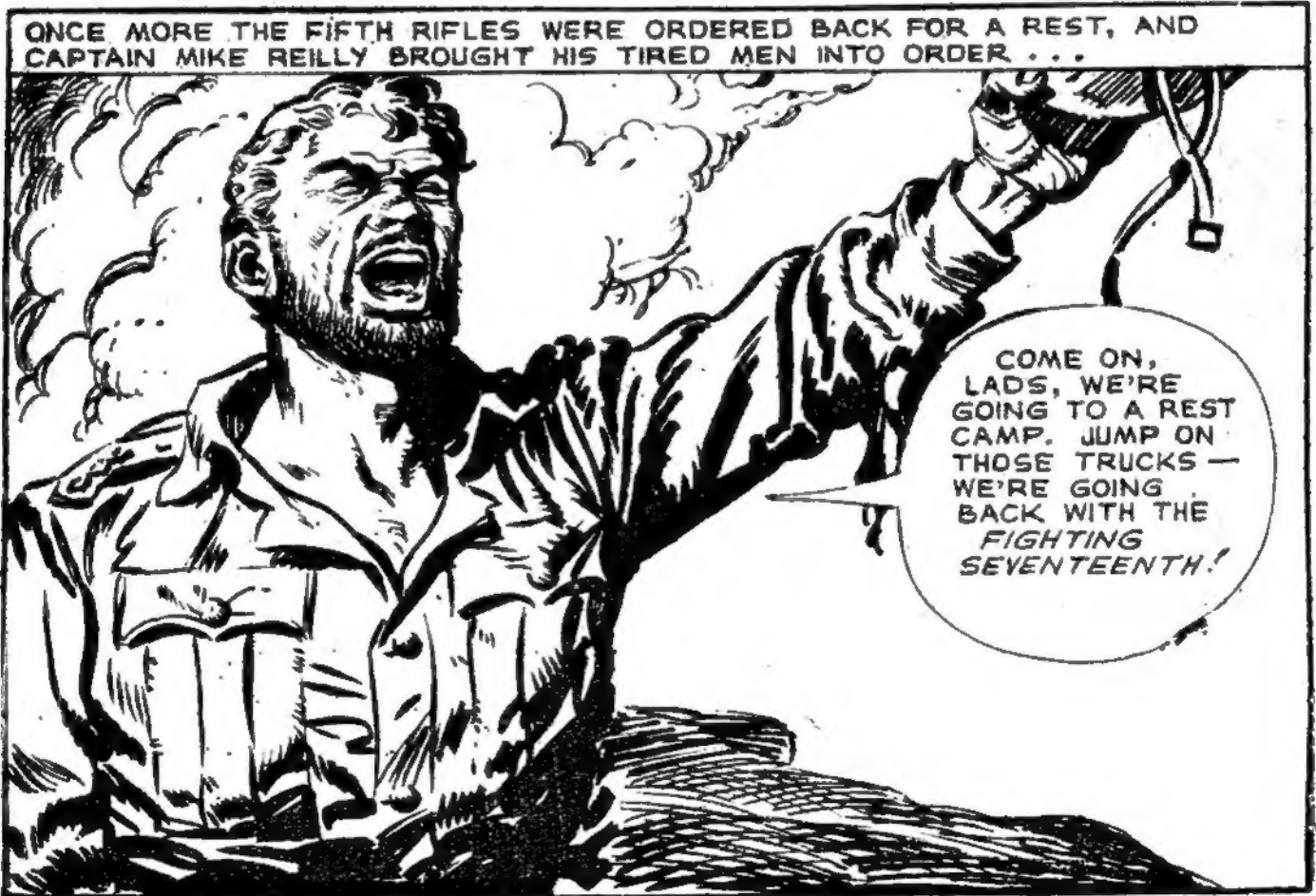
The Hungry Guns

CHEERED BY THE JUBILANT SOLDIERS ON THE HILL, THE BRITISH TANKS FANNED OUT AND SPED ON IN PURSUIT OF A RETREATING ENEMY.



THEN A JEEP CAME BUMPING UP THE HILLSIDE... CARRYING THE RED-TABBED BRIGADIER - AND A GRIMY SOLDIER WITH HIS ARM BANDAGED.





The Hungry Guns

THE WAR WAS NOT OVER FOR THE FIFTH RIFLES, FOR THE ROAD WAS LONG AND HARD. BUT WHEN THEY WERE RESTED AND HAD TO MARCH ONCE MORE INTO BATTLE, THEY DID SO WITH GREATER CONFIDENCE...



...FOR THE BRIGADIER HAD PROMISED THAT BEHIND THEM, ALWAYS READY TO COME TO THEIR AID, WOULD BE THE MEN OF THE 17TH. SUPPLY COMPANY...THE FIGHTING SEVENTEENTH.

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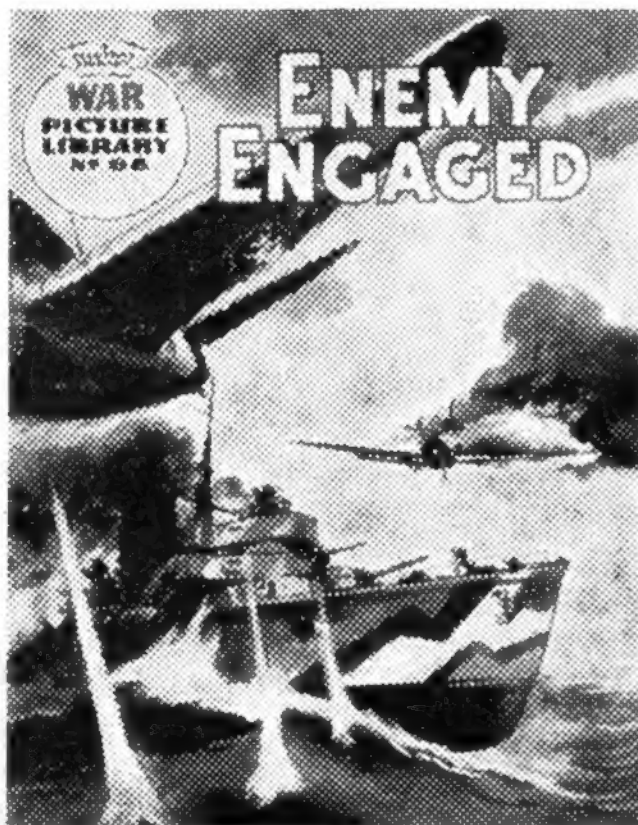
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